

Herd of Left Turns
Anna Delgado

*Documents submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the Master of Fine Arts in the
Department of Art*

2015

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Artist Statement

My artwork poetically examines my Mexican-American identity through stereotypical and often ritualized actions and objects. Cultural identity is often determined or influenced by how recognizable and distinguishable different rituals are. In return, people of a cultural group identify with these expected rituals, and then this self-acknowledgment or recognition affirms and defines one's cultural connection or social placement. One's cultural connection becomes "authentic" when it matches up with the preconceived notions of what, for example, "Mexicans" do. (We wear huarache sandals, decorate our houses with religious talismans, play soccer well, ride around in cars blasting mariachi music, and have someone in the family who is a vendor).

My father, a Mexican immigrant and my maternal grandparents, Italian and Scottish immigrants, made me aware of cultural and societal dynamics. As I identify with multiple cultures, I've never felt the need to defend, stand up for, or identify with any one in particular until I relocated out of Southern California, which has really changed the motivations for my work. I realized an absence of my own culture in many places and felt the need to represent it. I felt compelled to identify with the stereotypes, so easily recognizable, in order to defend, represent, and stand up for my own culture. At the same time, I became aware of what it means to be American and have the privilege to explore and represent my immigrant culture.

In *Herd of Left Turns* the Allcott gallery was transformed into a fragmented storefront, with a vendor cart in the middle, which operated as a functional piece to take donations but also acted as a sort of shrine flanked by two projections of my image as workers: one sweeping, surrounded by sentimental personalized votive candles, and the other making ceramic objects that are displayed on a connecting shelf.

I draw a lot of inspiration from Olvera Street which is the oldest street in Los Angeles. Olvera Street is a tourist attraction, a romanticized ideal of Mexican markets for some visitors, but more importantly it is a historical district full of cultural and artistic traditions. One of David Alfaro Siqueiros' murals even hovers above the booths tailored for the tourists. The street acts as a living museum; it could be mistaken for an inauthentic copy-pasted transplant, though it is the birthplace of L.A. Many of the vendors today are descendants from original vendors. I am interested in the confusing aspects of its presentation so near to Hollywood vs. its actual authenticity. What does the area mean to the people working there vs. the people visiting? Olvera Street has been established for generations but is still nomadic in nature. Everything—the stalls, food stands, and products can be moved easily, and even the welcome sign can be pushed away. Anytime that something is mobile, instead of considering it transitory or impermanent, I see it as something to be spread and shared, and ultimately it can have a more wide-spread impact.

Conceptually I look at what it means for each booth to specialize in one thing and how that parallels the art tradition of mastering a trade. I am specifically attracted to the booth selling the huarache sandals. These sandals are culturally significant (they are functional in Mexico but fashionable in CA and greater America). Even Urban outfitters sells "cool" updated versions of these sandals every season. Both the projected figures in *Herd of Left Turns* wear them, they are featured in my poster for the show, and even little huarache key chains hang on my cart. I ask myself if we are proud of these identifiers or if we are promoting and pandering to a consumer

culture that sees these items as “trendy, exotic, and easily identifiable.” For example, sombrero hats, sun and moon iconography, serape blankets, and Virgin Mary tokens are intermingled with the license plate name tags, all of which appear throughout my work. I enjoy “selling” my pieces for a donation because the objects mirror both the tourist goods sold at Olvera Street and the sentimental gifts I get from my family. I hope these highly personalized and culturally evocative objects (like votive candles flaunting my own picture) spread the idea that cultural identity is also individualized.

The theme of rediscovering one’s culture is a very American one; immigrants throughout the country’s history have sought out the “familiar,” the cultures they leave behind, and so they integrate their cultural history into their American identity. As an artist, I own these stereotypes in an aggressively rebellious way but also give a nuance to these goods and portrayals by inserting myself in that position. With a lightness of hand I hint at a fragmented culture to deal with the diaspora, as many people do.

Anna Delgado
Thesis presentation
UNC MFA 2015

Herd of Left Turns

Mexican-American identity through stereotypical and often ritualized actions/objects

CSUSB Demographics

Asian/Asian American 26%
Black/African American 7%
Caucasian/White 18%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina 53%
Native American 1%
Pacific Islander 1%

50% in San Bernardino

UNC Demographics

Asian/Asian American 15%
Black/African American 11%
Caucasian/White 73%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina 8%
Native American 2%
Pacific Islander Less than 1%

11% in Chapel Hill/Carrboro



HERD OF LEFT TURNS





Olvera Street,
Los Angeles



Olvera Street, Los Angeles

Olvera Street, Los Angeles





Olvera Street, Los Angeles





HERD OF LEFT TURNS

Anna Delgado

Opening Reception Monday March 2, 2015 6-8pm
John and June Allcott Gallery, Hanes Art Center
Showing March 2-6, 2015



Gallery Hours: M-F 8am-5pm 115 S. Columbia St. Chapel Hill, NC, 27514



Leonard Knight
“Salvation Mountain” 1984-2010
Imperial Valley, CA



Leonard Knight
"Salvation Mountain" 1984-2010
Imperial Valley, CA

HERD OF LEFT TURNS







Ana Mendieta
Untitled (Silueta series, Mexico), 1976



*About how wind
and animals cross
borders but some-
times people can't.
About how that
double yellow line
and linear horizon of
thoughts move in the
same patterns—their
habits never chang-
ing—over a hill,
next to a yard, into
the house, covering
couches and roaches.*

*I'd like to thank you
for being here and for
participating in this
festive event.*

*It means a great
deal to me.*

Thank you.

*With love,
Anna*



*I make work about the
murky water of Southern
California's "Inland
Empire" where the smog
from Los Angeles is
trapped and nestles into
the valleys so that birds
swim through the thick
and seemingly haunted
windy fires that make
cacti prickle voices into
yells. I like to run for
miles there imagining the
transparency of gates or
things without substance.
I make work about how
it still feels as if we don't
have a place to sit during
lunchtime. About how
the topography of our
mountains line up with
the topography of our
faces. About how my
abuelita speaks only
Spanish. About how for
Thanksgiving we eat
lasagna and tamales.*





Walmart
San Bernardino, CA

Janine Antoni
"Coddle" 1998



They are

*Un Mapa unfolding
Un Desfile shoulder ready
Caras dancing by a torch
Cuerpos to other Cuerpos*



UNA NIÑA'S MIL MANOS

ELLOS SON

THEY ARE

UN MAPA

A MAP UNFOLDING A ROAD,
DOING MORE THAN NUDGING US.

UN DESFILE

A PARADE THAT WIDENS
OUR SHOULDERS,
READY TO HEAL THE CUT
OF AN EYE, GREEN AS A WOUND.

MANOS PARA USTED.

ELLOS SON

THEY ARE

CARAS

THE FACES PAINTED ON
A CAVE WALL, DANCING
IN FRONT OF A TORCH.

ELLOS SON

THEY ARE

CUERPOS

THE BODIES THAT GIVE
ENTRY TO OTHER BODIES.

MANOS PARA USTED.

POEMAS BY JUAN

1. memoria
- 2.
3. guarded borders

1. give her a shower
2. tie her shoes
- 3.

1. a detained bird
2. a forbidden word
- 3.

sí or no

1. libro
2. muerte
- 3.

1. boxes
- 2.
3. schools

1. at a sidewalk's edge
2. in a gallery's fish tank
- 3.

1. a hunger
2. a prayer
- 3.

1. another foreign tongue
- 2.
3. a misunderstood visitor

sí or no

Carreta de Questions and Candles



poemas y preguntas by Juan

Does your candle's
shadow lead you
across _____?

Like a relative,
does your candle need
you to _____?

Can a candle flicker longer than
_____?

At home, is your candle
the only working window?

A candle's patience needs a
good _____?

When candles migrate
do they move in _____?

Where do candles
gather besides in a church's belly?

Does your candle's tongue
surface like _____?

Is a candle _____?

Are candles like birds
singing under a canopy?









Simon Leung
“Squatting Project” 1994



Mierle Ukeles
“Washing, Tracks, Maintenance: Outside”
Still from performance, 1973







Home of Thomas McGovern
San Bernardino, CA





Unknown Artists

“Cueva de las Manos” (Cave of the Hands)

Santa Cruz Province, Argentina 7370 BC









Judy Baca
“RFK Learning Center” 2010

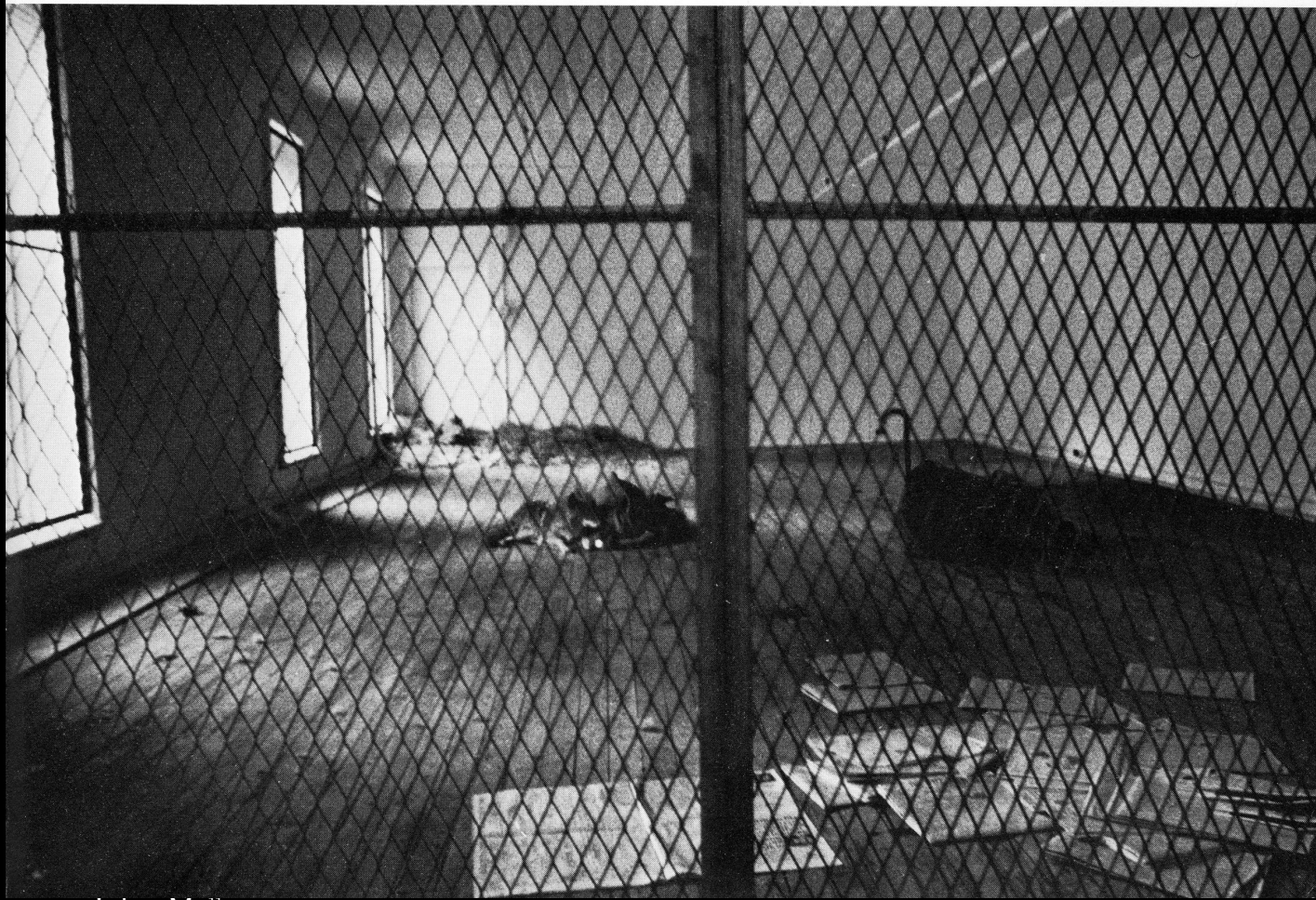












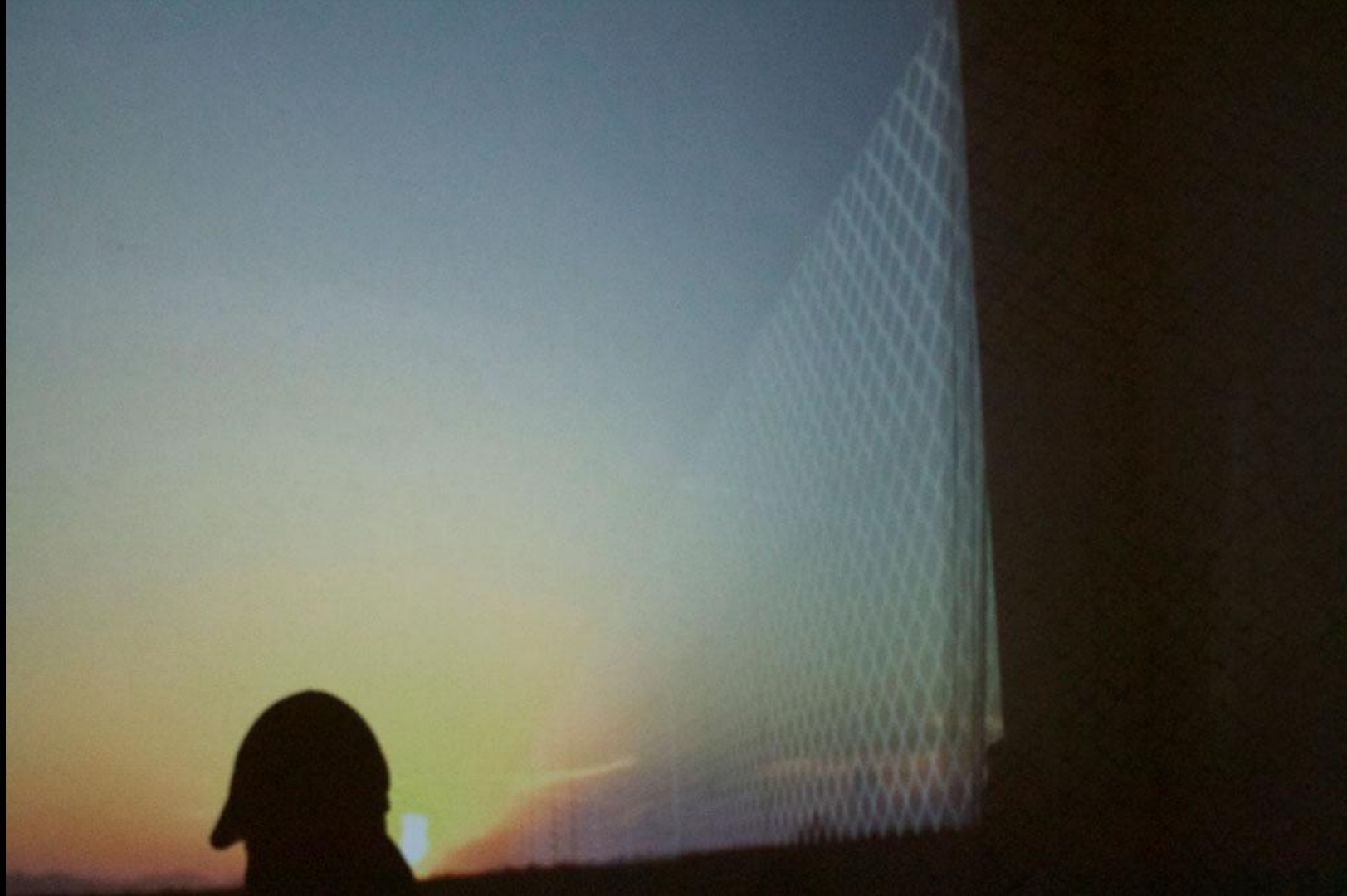
Joseph Beuys

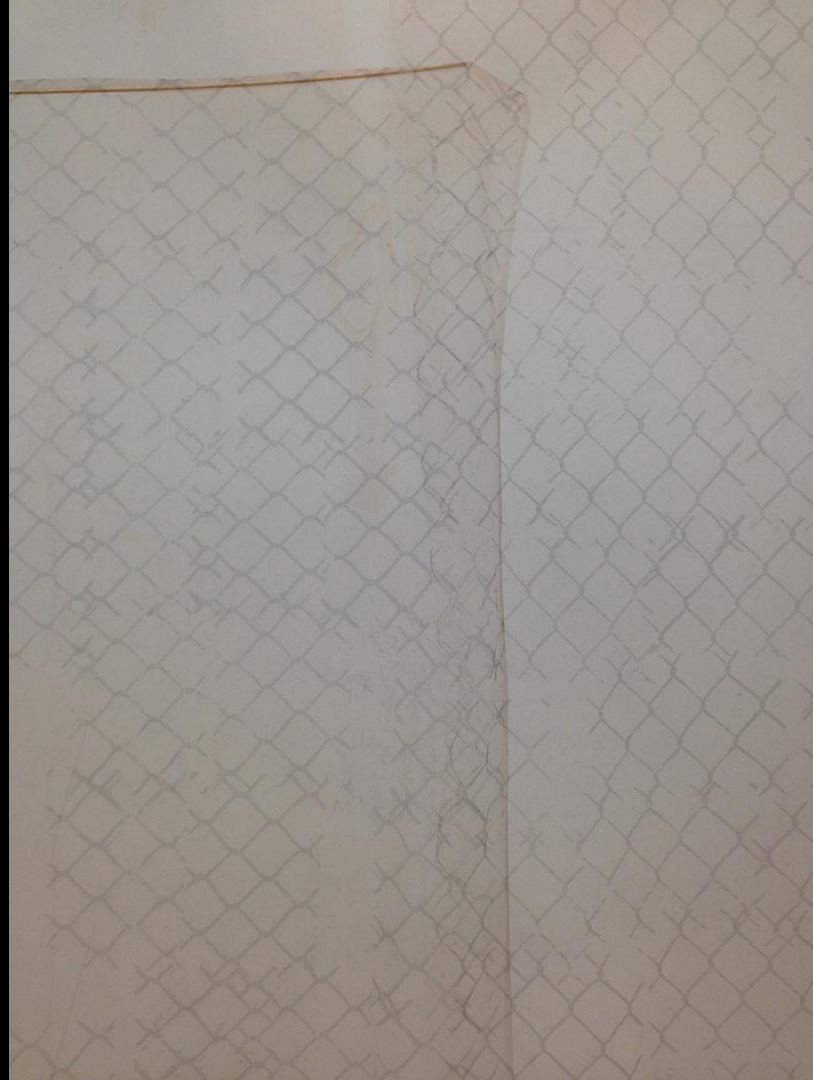
"I Like America and America Likes Me"

performance still 1974



Joseph Beuys
“I Like America and America Likes Me”
performance still 1974





Glenna Avila
“L.A. Freeway Kids”
101 Hollywood Freeway 1984



HERD OF LEFT TURNS

















Glenna Avila
“L.A. Freeway Kids”
101 Hollywood Freeway 1984



Ant Farm artists
“Cadillac Ranch” 1974
Amarillo, Texas



Robbie Shone
Hikers in National Geographic, 2015



© Robbie Shone





Fast and Furious Video Game Cover



Frank Romero
"Going to the Olympics"
101 Hollywood Freeway 1984

San Bernardino, CA
Neighbor's car







HERD OF LEFT TURNS







Our Lady of Guadalupe Photo of Altar
Mariposa Fuente Photography
Huntington Beach, CA 2015



Mural on “La Placita” in Olvera St
on the the first church in LA





Giotto
"Saint Francis Preaching to the Birds" 1295-
1300



Ana Mendieta
Untitled (Silueta series, Mexico), 1976









Juan Solis
Mural *Castellanos* at the Mariachi Plaza 1994



Juan Solis
Mural *Castellanos* at the Mariachi Plaza 1994





Elizabeth Retolaza of
LAS PERLAS TAPATÍAS



Boshamer Stadium
Chapel Hill, NC







Thank you



Thank you Roxana, Sabine, and Lien.